

## AIRGRAM

78-737,56301

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NEA-5	REP	AF
3	EUR	FE
3	CU	INR
1	IO	AID
1	AGR	COM
1	INT	LAB
1	TR	XMB
1	ARMY	CIA
1	OSD	USA
1	NSA	NSA

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(128)

HANDLING INDICATOR

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEC 9 11 22

INFO: ATHENS, NEA/GTI

FROM: Amconsul THESSALONIKI

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MB

DATE: November 7, 1962

SUBJECT: Reaction to Cuban Crisis

REVIEWED by

RELEASE

DECLASSIFY

EXCISE

DECLASSIFY in PART

DENY

Non-responsive info.

FOI, EO or PA exemptions

TS authority to:

CLASSIFY as

OADR

DOWNGRADE TS to ( ) S or ( ) C, OADR

The Greeks, at least in this consular district, have reacted to the U.S. move to stop the missile buildup in Cuba with the loyalty of a tried and true ally. The whole episode as it has developed to this point has provided them with a powerful reassurance that the United States is the leader of the free world which they hope and believe we must be. At the same time they look almost gleefully upon the dilemma which was faced by the Soviet Union when the quarantine was announced, and behaved as if it were a personal victory for them when the USSR announced it would dismantle and remove its missiles from Cuba. Additional strong U.S. moves in Cuba, if they appear justified, would probably receive the strong support of the bulk of the population in Northern Greece.

The reactions to the Cuban crisis given here were observed by American non-government and government personnel, including military, as well as other foreigners in Northern Greece.

Reaction of Leaders

Reports of conversations with Greek officials and other influential Greeks point to a landslide support of President Kennedy's decision to impose a quarantine of Cuba. In commenting on the action, these individuals seldom hesitated in indicating their full support of the move which they justified as being entirely necessary because of the attempted Soviet expansion of its military power. The view was often expressed that it might have been made sooner since this would have demonstrated even more dramatically American determination to oppose

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In

Out

Drafted by:

M. J. J. J.

11/1/62

Contents and Classification Approved by:

Clearances:

J. J. J. J. 11/1/62

B-1

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From Thessaloniki

any expansion of Soviet power. While a few expressed some concern about what the Soviet reaction would be, most of these leaders showed more confidence than many Americans ever would dare in asserting that the Russians had no choice but to back down. After the Soviet decision, more than a few came up to Americans, congratulated them on the victory, and stated that they had never doubted for a minute what the outcome would be.

The opinion of [redacted] was representative of the reaction of local leaders and dignitaries. He said that he was pleased to read of the President's decision, since the Communists and Russians understood only might. He also pointed out, two days before KHRUSHCHEV ordered the dismantling of the missile sites, that the Communists have no compunctions about retreating any more than they do about advancing, provided their interests demanded it.

Queen FRANKINA, who was in Thessaloniki for three days for the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the liberation of Thessaloniki, expressed at one point to the Mayor of Hartford, Connecticut her uneasiness over the situation. She said on October 26 that she hoped the President was prepared to seek a compromise solution to the crisis, and wondered what the Soviet reaction to an invasion of Cuba would be. On Sunday evening, however, when the news reached her about Khrushchev's decision to dismantle the Soviet missile bases in Cuba, she and King PAUL expressed to the Consul General their relief and pleasure at Khrushchev's decision. The Queen, in particular, held the Consul General in conversation for several minutes despite the fact that he was the first in line to be presented with a long line waiting behind him. At the end of the conversation the Queen was so moved that she placed her left hand on his shoulder while shaking hands again. The Prime Minister also stated to the Consul General that he was very pleased with the announcement.

#### Reaction of General Public

Reports from members of the American community indicate that the reaction of the general public was one of enthusiastic support of the President's action. Many Greeks made a point of relating conversations held at the local cafenio or in social groups about the near unanimous support of the U.S. move. One high school professor related how in a gathering of six professional men on October 27, including a doctor and an army officer, all arrived by different paths to the conclusion that the President's action was necessary. A group at a cafenio, two days after the news reached Thessaloniki, unanimously agreed that an invasion of Cuba was the next step. Two U.S. Army officers reported an enthusiastic response to the U.S. move by Greeks of all classes and occupations during a field trip in Thrace and Eastern Macedonia from October 22 - 27.

To a great many the next logical step seemed to be an invasion of Cuba in order to deal the Communists a sound whipping. The undercurrent of anxiety

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reported among responsible persons in Athens did not seem to reach the man in the street in Thessaloniki. One foreigner remarked in this respect that the Greek's strong dislike of communism and Slavs in general, and his belief in the rightness of U.S. policy and in U.S. power made him blissfully unaware of the dangers involved in making a determined stand to stop Soviet expansion in Cuba.

In addition, the whole dramatic episode which lasted from Monday until Sunday evening coincided almost exactly with the city's most festive annual event, the celebration of the Feast of Saint Demetrios on October 26, the same day as the anniversary of the city, and the celebration of "Oxi" Day on October 28, 1940, when the Greek leader METAXAS said "No" to an Italian ultimatum. Because Saint Demetrios Day this year is the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the liberation of Thessaloniki from the Turks, the ceremonies, which ran from Wednesday to Sunday, were more extensive than usual. The entire royal family was present, including Princess SOPHIA's husband of six months, Don Juan CARLOS of Spain, Prime Minister KARAMANLIS and five of his Cabinet ministers, as well as the Mayor of Hartford, Connecticut, with whom this city has established a sister city relationship. About 18 units of the Greek fleet were here for the visit, and a huge military parade, the largest of the year, was held. In addition, a large student parade was held as well as receptions, special decorations throughout the city, frequent appearances of the royal family and the Prime Minister at dedications of housing projects, hospitals, a museum, etc. Finally, the extremely pleasant Indian Summer weather which lasted throughout the five days made it difficult for most Thessalonians to concentrate on the crisis situation unfolding in Cuba. While the crisis almost certainly dampened some of the gaiety of the ceremonies, the effect probably worked more in the other direction. The festival atmosphere made the threat of nuclear war seem unreal and helped to induce the comforting thought that the United States would take care of the situation and everything would come out all right.

#### Summary of Press Reaction

The press accorded full treatment to the crisis. The front pages were generally loaded with headlines and photographs and with more than one column on the latest developments. However, special editions of a surprising number of pages, planned weeks before the anniversary celebrations, forced the Cuban story to the back pages on October 26 or 28, depending on the newspaper.

Another interesting point is that there has been very little editorial comment on the situation, although it is known that the editors of the two leading newspapers, Ekeedonia and Ellinikos Vorras, have been openly in agreement with the President's actions of the past week. (The occasion of the anniversary celebrations probably helped to reduce the amount of comment.) Wire service stories were carried in volume, but neither Athens nor local reaction was printed. Ellinikos Vorras commented on October 25 that hope remains for a peaceful settlement and attacked the Soviet Union for placing missiles in Cuba. Drassis, Ellinikos Vorras, and Eleftheros Laos on October 29 or 30 credited the saving of the peace to the President's quick action, and went even further by

stating that the situation was a moral victory for the West, a triumphant victory for the United States, and that Khrushchev was obliged to put his tail between his legs and withdraw unconditionally.

Bulgaria:

Early reports concerning a military buildup in Bulgaria generally have not proven to be correct and later indications are that there were few preparations there. General Tsannetic said on October 25 that evidence of Bulgarian preparations along the border was "almost nothing." Two U.S. Army officers inspected the border last weekend and talked to Greek field commanders in Thrace and found no evidence of any unusual preparations. The Army Attache in Sofia drove from Sofia to Thessaloniki on October 29 and reported no unusual activity along the main road from Sofia to the Struma Valley exit. He saw no indications of civilian control measures; critical bridges and tunnels were unguarded and military traffic was at a minimum. This officer stated there was considerably more activity on the Greek side and that at one point near Sidirokastron the Greek Army was riding the road. (This, however, is not unusual.) Newspaper reports and rumors circulating in Thessaloniki these past days have been to the effect that the Bulgarians were not undertaking large-scale military preparations.

Miscellaneous Developments

The price of the gold sovereign rose from 291.5 drachmas on October 22 to a high of 309 drachmas on October 27. By October 31, the price had fallen to 295. About 50,000 gold sovereigns were sold between October 20-30. It is estimated that during the five days following the crisis the rate of sales rose from 4,000 to 6-7,000 sovereigns daily.

There were no reports of food hoarding or other unusual activities here, such as troop movements, special radio broadcasts, etc., as a result of the Cuban crisis.

Clearcert Procedure

Thessaloniki port authorities were asked on October 27 to inform the Consulate General of any ship departures for the Cuban quarantine area. On October 29 the Harbor Master had already received instructions from the Greek Ministry of Merchant Marine to assist U.S. authorities in carrying out ship inspections under the clearcert system. Local harbor authorities indicated their readiness to cooperate fully in making the system operate effectively. They pointed out, however, that very few ships leave from Thessaloniki as a last port of call before proceeding to the quarantine area.

U.S. Citizens and DAD Plan

There was some anxiety expressed by U.S. citizens in the area during the first few days of the crisis and a few gave thought to returning to the United States. A meeting was held in the office of the Consul General on October 25

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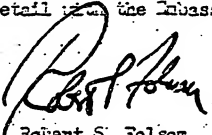
4-36

From Thessalonika

with these leading members of the American community

Lessons Learned from the Crisis

In addition, the crisis served to point up certain problems in the fields of organization, communications and liaison between the Consulate General and the Embassy, which will be discussed in detail with the Embassy at the earliest possible moment.

  
Robert S. Folson  
Consul General

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**EXCISED COPY FOLLOWS**

# AIRGRAM

611.5722/18-762

18-737.56361

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HANDLING INDICATOR

INFO: ATTENS, NSA/GTI

ANALYSIS &amp; DISTRIBUTION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, A/CDC/MB

DATE: November 7, 1962

DATE

FROM : Amconsul THESSALONIKI

SUBJECT: Reaction to Cuban Crisis

REVIEWED by *[Signature]*

(X) RELEASE (X) DECLASSIFY

(X) EXCISE (X) DECLASSIFY in PART

( ) DENY ( ) Non-responsive info.

FOI, EO or PA exemptions *[initials]*

TS authority to:

( ) CLASSIFY as \_\_\_\_\_ OADR

( ) DOWNGRADE TS to ( ) S or ( ) C, OADR

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Dated by:

Diaz/ky:ok

Clearances:

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Exemptions and Classification Approved by:

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### U.S. Citizens and Ship Plans

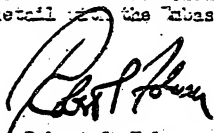
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Robert S. Felson  
Consul General

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